

Testimony on House Bill No. 5267

Given before the House Education Committee on 5/16/12

Thank you Madame Chair and members of the education committee. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 5267 today. As a former teacher of at risk students, this is a bill that is close to my heart as its goal is to help students who have dropped-out of school to earn a high school diploma.

House Bill 5267 seeks to codify the seat-time waiver granted by the Michigan Department of Education to local districts for students who participate in a dropout recovery program. By codifying the seat-time waiver, we will create more long-term stability for those districts that wish to create and offer such credit recovery opportunities. Please understand that this effort is aimed at helping dropouts. This does not take a foundation allowance away from one school district to give it to another. These students represent a foundation allowance that was not going to be paid out to anyone because the student left the system.

The seat time waiver allows for a variety of learning opportunities such as online learning and blended instruction so that a student who is pregnant, suffers from an illness, or struggles in a traditional school environment can learn skills and earn credits in the least restrictive environment for that individual.

Colleagues, I wish that opportunities like this had been available for the students who dropped-out of Orion Alternative High School, where I taught for nine and a half years. I hated when a student left our building for good without a diploma or GED. Under HB 5267, with the seat time waiver, the drop out recovery programs will be able to continue to focus on individual students. The program under this bill includes an intense mentoring system to offer

the kind of support that those students who "slipped through the cracks" need.

This legislation gives our local districts the tools they need to not only educate kids but to positively affect dropout rates statewide. Keep in mind that there are many ways we can attempt to educate students who have left the system, but we need to follow best practices. House Bill 5267 ensures does just that. Under this bill, the state will only pay for results because payments are only made to the program when educational goals are met and documented. These programs have a history of experience and success in Michigan. Students in the drop-out recovery programs actually earn a high school diploma from the district that offers the program.

I ask you to support House Bill 5267. This is an important step in recognizing that a "one size fits all" system is not reaching a lot of Michigan's kids. I thank you for your consideration and now it is my pleasure to introduce Rebekah Richards, Chief Academic Officer of The American Academy to give much deeper information and answer any questions you may have on the bill or the instruction model addressed.